

ABSTRACT

Embodiments of a peripheral backlighting system for keyboards are shown and described, which include one or more light-emitting panels exterior to the keyswitches of the keyboard. The panels are preferably electroluminescent material and surround at least two sides, and preferably all sides, of the stem of a keyswitch or the space in which the stem slides up and down during use. Alternatively, the electroluminescent panel(s) may extend substantially continuously between and underneath a plurality of keyswitches. The panels extend closely adjacent to the stem or stem path, or under the keyswitch, to be as far under the key cap as possible without extending into the stem or cap of the keyswitch. The EL panels are preferably powered by the computer keyboard port, via voltage inverters. Preferably, the keyswitch is translucent or partially translucent, and the base plate over the EL panels, if any, is at least partially translucent or transparent. This way, the light from the light-emitting panels radiates upward through, and preferably around the outer surface of, the translucent keycaps, rather than up through an aperture or lightpipe in the center of the keycaps.